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SILLY SUPERSTITION.

The Widespread Belief That Opals Are Unlucky.

Jewelers Who Are Afraid to Keep Them Stock—Some Reasons Why the Beautiful Gems Are Viewed with Distrust.

The silly superstition about opals—that they bring ill luck—dies hard, says Minerals. In fact, although Queen Victoria has taken a firm stand against it and proves her position by making presents of opal jewelry to her friends and relatives, there are many who think that it is increasing. The superstition and the arrival within a year of a bushel or so of opels from Australia, unsurpassed in color, have had a tendency to lower the price of these lovely gems, and some dealers are willing to dispose of their stock of them for less than cost. One jeweler in New York, who formerly One jeweler in New York, who formerly sold a good many, refuses to keep them any longer. "I haven't an opal in the place," said he. "Mind, I'm not in the least affected by this idea of opals bringing bad luck, for I love the stones, and would as lief have an opal on my finger as a diamond, but they are running down in value and have but few buyers, so that it does not pay me to keep them, and, besides, women come back here with opal rings and pins that I sold them years ago and demand to exchange them for something else, because in the meantime their pet cats have died, or their babies have had croup, or their neighbors have expressed horror at their temerity in wearing a forbidden gem. In other words, they want to exchange worn and ansalable goods for things that are newer and of more value, and in cases where they are good customers I have to submit to

One man in Brooklyn took the opal out of his ring and smashed it to atoms with a hatchet because he had failed in

While Sir Walter Scott did something to give the opal a bad name by his account of it in "Anne of Gierstein," it was held in distrust long before his time. It was considerably in use in Venice at the time of the plague and it was noticed there in the hospitals that before death the stone would sometimes brighten on the victim's finger. Is never seemed to occur to the people that the illness could produce the glow of color; they took it for granted that the stone occasioned the illness. As a matter of fact opals are affected by heat, even by that of the hand, and the fever, being at its height just before death, caused the colors to shine with unwonted clearness. This confirmed the superstition, and to this day there are same and able-bodied people who believe that a chip of stone in the house can cause calamities. Sometimes it seems as if mankind has not gone far beyond its swaddling clothes as yet.

Probably another reason for the distrust excited in opals is the fact that they change and lose their color. This has its cause in the softness and porousness of the material and its capacity both for absorbing water and with parting with what it has, one of which transformations tends to make it dull, the other chalky and opaque. A peculvariety of opal, black in color, yet exhibiting iridescent flashes, was cut into handsome stones, but on opening the papers that contained them a few weeks later it was discovered that they had crumbled into powder. They were said to have come from New Zealand.

The transparent opals that come from Honduras are believed to regain color, after it has become faint, by soaking them in oil. Doubtless the most curlous form of opal, but one that does not mmend itself for use in ornament, is the hydrophane, that was known centuries ago as the oculus mundi, or "eye of the world"—a name purely fantastical-and that has recently been found in small quantities in Colorado.

This stone has a wonderful power of absorption. In its usual state it is of a yellowish, waxy tint, but when water is dropped upon it the tint slowly passes away, and from being translucent it becomes transparent. On excosure to the air the water evaporates in an hour, leaving the stone as it was

TELEGRAPHY BY TELEPHONE. How a Girl Held Secret Conversation with

It was noonday in a busy down-town on ..., and a Boston World reporter was awaiting the return of the manager, when the pretty stenographer went to the telephone and, after the usual parley with central called: "Hello, Charley. Are you busy just now?" Apparently Charley was not, for she continued: "Oh, yes, I had a lovely time, but don't you think—" Here there came a strange pause, and with a pencil she tapped idly on a light piece of board which she had taken from her desk and was holding before the transmitter. "A case of wait a minute," thought the eavesdropper sympathetically, but the pretty rl spoke again, with a laugh: "I don't elieve it, for I heard—" Then she began tapping on the board again. Then the reporter caught on. She was telegraphing. So when she returned to her desk he remarked: "I notice you have an original method of telephoning." "Oh, did you see that? Well, I'll tell you about it, but you must not give it away. You see I can't use the tele-phone here without every one in the room hearing what I say, and they do say that those girls in the central office listen to the conversations over the wire, and, as Charley and I are both telegraphers, we invented this method of conversing by telephone. Isn't it a grat scheme? Not one in the office un-derstands it." But a young man at an adjacent desk worked a sounder in pan-tonine and winked at the Herald man.

AN INGENIOUS CIPHER.

How the Friends of a French Thief Got Themseives Into Jail. Some years ago the friends of a Par-

isian thief adopted a decidedly unique method of carrying on a clandestine correspondence with while he was awaiting trial. One day the jailer was visited by the prisoner's betrothed, who asked him to give her lover an envelope. This upon being opened was found to contain simply a small lock of her hair, around which was folded a leaf of a book. The jailer did not con- of heat by Turkish and other warm sider it worth his while to deliver this

by the same person. This aroused the suspicion of the governor of the prison, to whom had been detailed the circum-stances. He determined to investigate the meaning, and accordingly first ex-amined the printed leaf. This he found was torn from a novel and contained twenty-six lines on each side. He then turned his attention to the hair and discovered that there were twenty-six pieces of unequal length. This puzzled him for awhile, and then, suddenly jumping to the conclusion that there must be some connection between the numbers of the printed lines and the number of hairs, he laid each of the latter along the line of the page they respectively reached, beginning with the shortest hair at the top of the

After changing them about several times he discovered that each hair pointed to a different letter, and the combination thus produced formed a slang sentence, by means of which the prisoner was given to understand that his friends had ascertained the day on which he was to be taken to court and were determined to make a bold attempt to rescue him as soon as he made

his appearance.

Taking the cue the governor adopted every precaution to frustrate the welllaid plans of the outsiders; the attempt was made, and as a natural consequence the conspirators soon found themselves in the same condition as the one for whom they had planned the rescue,-

AN EX-ROYAL OUTLAW.

Milan, of Servia, is Indeed a Man With-out a Country. Milan, the former king of Servia, oc-

cupies at the present moment the most extraordinary position which it is possi-

He has abandoned not only all his rights as a member of the reigning house of Servin, as well as his property, honors and dignities in the kingdom, but he has even renounced his citizenship and undertaken never again to set

his foot in the country.

There is some talk, says the New York Recorder, of his becoming nat-uralized as a Russian, but he has not done so yet, and accordingly he is just now without nationality or civil status. He is without what the French describe as an etat civii, and is, to all intents and purposes, an outlaw, since he possesses no legal rights of any kind what-

He is the most homeless and abandoned of creatures, and his position is so abnormal that the emperor of Austria has deemed it necessary to deprive him of the honorary colonelship of the Austrian regiment of infantry which he has hitherto held and to remove his

name from the Austrian army list.

It is the first time that a king has ever placed himself in such a predicament as that of the ex-monarch of Servia, and it is to be hoped that it will

not constitute a precedent. YELLOW DIAMONDS.

The Process by Which They Are Converted Into White Gems.

Numerous attempts have been made during the last few years to convert the yellow Cape diamonds into white gems. A short time ago it was announced that a Belgian had discovered the secret and would soon flood the market, figuratively speaking, with white diamonds, says the Paris Journal.

M. Gilon, a chemist, conducted a series of experiments to discover the way to change the color of diamonds. In accordance with the principle of physics governing complementary colors Gilon prepared a solution of alcohol and ani-line violet, to which he added a few grains of benzoe gum. He dipped a yel-low diamond into this fluid and allowed it to remain a quarter of an hour. When he took it out again the diamond was white but it had lost its brilliancy.

Gilon renewed the experiment with a strong solution of aniline, allowing the diamond to rest in the mixture only a few seconds. When the gem was taken out of the solution it was pure white and sparkled brilliantly. Weeks later the diamond had lost none of its whiteness or brilliancy, and Gilon is con-vinced that gems so treated will long retain these qualities. This would seem to prove that the change is possi-

If the "falsified" stone is looked at through a microscope no defects whatever can be seen; neither does the diamond lose any of its color when rubbed with camel's hair or linen.

Formerly it was thought sufficient to dip a "false" diamond into alcohol to discover the treatment to which it had been subjected and to restore the yellow color. That often suffices, it is true, but Gilon's experiments made the color so solid that an alcohol bath failed

Is there, then, no means to discover the spuriousness? Yes, and Gilon dis-covered it, too. It is only necessary to place a diamond supposed to be colored in aqua regia for one second. If it be really false the yellow color will re-

THE HABIT OF WASHING.

Something About the Custom of Abiution of the Present Day. Whether the opponents of ablution fear the shock of cold immersion or

whether they dread the cleansing stimulation thus applied to the excreting skin surface their objection must appear to most persons possessed of ordi-nary health and vigor to threaten impairment of both by fostering uncleanliness, says the London Lancet. If, on of heat by Turkish and other warm baths which appear objectionable we A day or two later a similar inclosure was handed in at the prison gate and shared the fate of the predecessor. In the course of a week another ment. It has undoubtedly its inting time and place if rightly applied. It is no less true, however, that experience has often proved the mischievous ef-fects of its misuse—in case, for exam-ple, of cardiac weakness or general ex-haustion. Cold bathing in like manner is not without its occasional risks. It is not without its occasional risks. It is not suitable for persons enfeebled from any organic cause, though mere nervous languor is often braced and benefited by it. It has no proper place among the habits of those who are subject to chronic visceral congestions. As regards one advantage derived from bathing, i. e., its cleansing property, there is no reasonable ground for differ-ence of opinion. Man, whether savage or civilized, appears, as a rule, to have no doubt on the subject. Wherever we find him with water accessible he is a bath-

er. Less practiced by one people than another though it may be, there still is commonly recognizable a constant habit of ablution, and this fact in itself attests at least an almost universal be-lief in the necessity of insuring clean-liness by means of washing. Nor can we find reason to doubt the general soundness of this belief. In bathing temperature is of course a chief consideration. For the robust cold immersion followed by rapid friction is a valuable tonic of nerve, skin and heart func-tion. For less vigorous constitutionsthose, for example, which have been tried by disease and those of young children—the addition of heat up to the temperature point is only judicious. With some persons a warm bath is a daily luxury. Notwithstanding its effieacy as a means of cleanliness, however, this custom is, or ought to be, discredited by its inevitable action as a nervous depressant, which places it in an unfavorable position compared with

the more bracing practice of cold effu-sion. The benefit derived from bath-ing, therefore, is likely to assert itself in spite of all adverse criticism and its mismanagement, which is only too comaton, should not be suffered to condemn it in the eyes of any judicious and clean-

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